BYTE

INSPIRATION AT THE YEAR'S END

The Mac markets changed during 1990, and new markets are developing

How time flies. The first year of the new decade whipped by as fast as a screen update on a Mac IIfx. It's time to evaluate what's happened to the computing community, including the Mac's position within it. In the IBM-compatible world, the Rest of Them have been cranking out 486 systems at higher clock speeds, and Windows 3.0 is a major improvement as far as DOS-based graphical user interfaces (GUIs) go.

Apple, after some dithering about, took muster and waged the battle of the market share on two fronts. It took the high ground in March with its introduction of the Mac IIfx, the first-ever Mac clocked at 40 MHz. In October, Apple began the blitzkrieg on the low end with three new low-cost Macs. Just as important, the company slashed prices on the existing models.

Apple's attack plan so far has been impressive, but it's not without flaws. The Mac IIfx's much-touted SCSI DMA will not work with anything but A/UX. System 7.0 still hasn't seen the light of day. The features on the low-cost Macs are so-so, including their pricing. If Apple is indeed in the market-share battle for the long haul, I wonder whether it will have the nerve to reduce prices further if the situation warrants it. In other words, we've gone through another year of some improvements to the Mac and its software, but we're still waiting for the next Mac revolution. I'm getting pretty itchy waiting for it to come.

The one place I see a difference is not in the volleys from the big guns over-head, but when I look in the trenches where the small Mac developers hunker down. Try as we might, we just can't kill these little guys. We entice them with promises of greater profits (Windows 3.0), hotter development systems (Next-Step), and other baubles, but they stick to the Mac like glue.

Whatever the reason, it's these folks who make the most interesting Mac software today, and who typically define new software categories. These developers think about more than just adding more features to a word processor or better kerning to a page-layout system. They think about what might be possible with a Mac.
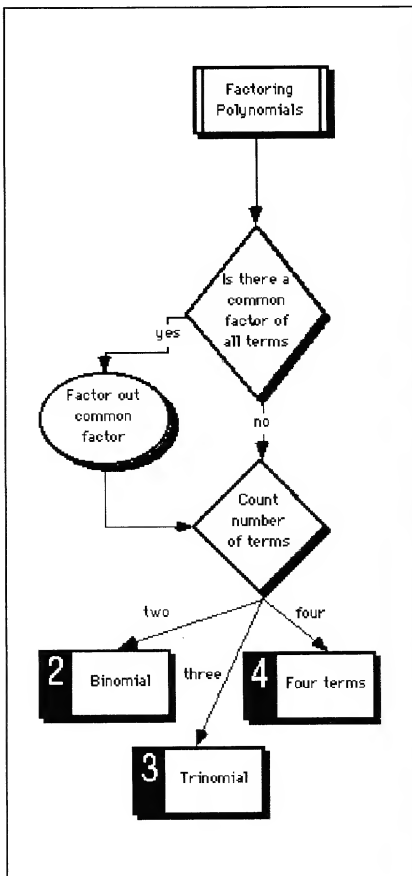
The Mac Gets Inspired

Not surprisingly, one of the newer Mac products I've found is called Inspiration 2.0. It's from a tiny family-owned company called Ceres Software in Portland, Oregon, and it's been around for a year now, largely ignored. I spent a pleasant time conversing with its creator, Don Helfgott. He calls his program a thought processor, but that doesn't do it justice.

Inspiration 2.0 takes the Mac's ability to give you a consistent and meaningful GUI and lets you brainstorm, cranking out ideas by the bushel basket. It then organizes the ideas in a way that helps you realize what, if anything, you've really invented. Inspiration 2.0 is sort of a visual diagraming and outlining tool interweaved with a simple word processor. It's the first computer aid to creative thinking I've tried that actually works—and I've tried them all.

The theory behind Inspiration 2.0 goes something like this. Databases, word processors, and spreadsheets store and access information in ways that don't help us relate information more clearly, because they fail to distinguish between right-brain thinking (i.e., creativity, images, comprehension, imagination,

Inspiration 2.0 combines visual diagraming and outlining with a simple word processor. This Inspiration flowchart outlines the general algorithm for factoring a polynomial, as shown in listing 1.

visualization, music, and daydreaming) and left-brain thinking (i.e., logic, sequence, reasoning, and analysis). Inspiration 2.0 works by filling the gap between these two kinds of thinking.

Other programs have promised to accentuate the synergy between the right and left brains. Neil Larson's Maxthink, early versions of Dave Winer's Think-Tank outliner, ODS's Consultant, and a myriad of other shareware have all skipped through this software minefield before. None of them really pulled it off, however, because they just didn't have a good model to implement.

Inspiration 2.0 has a good model, and that's why it succeeds. Rather than trying to be all things to all thinkers, the Helfgotts have pinned down their customers—writers, entrepreneurs, creative directors, analysts, planners, educators, and consultants.

They did not make Inspiration 2.0 some kind of unwieldy general management tool, or imbue it with powerful features that its target audience will not need. In short, they didn't kitchen-sink this product by trying to make it fit the needs of a general presentation tool, a business graphics package, or a free-form charting tool.

The only thing that Inspiration 2.0 assumes is that you think visually. If you never leave the mental domain of numbers and text, Inspiration 2.0 won't do a thing for you. But if you think in terms of relationships and their organization, this program must be tried to be appreciated.

I've spent the last month doing just that. In fact, I've fallen into its organiza-

tional metaphors so easily that it's sometimes hard to go back to a more traditional outliner like More or Acta. I'm now using Inspiration 2.0 in my introductory programming class (in which I teach HyperCard 2.0 and HyperTalk) to help my students invent and categorize algorithms and get them into a form that will suggest code to them.

One way Inspiration 2.0 does that is by letting them come at both ends of a programming problem at the same time. My students learn about top-down design and bottom-up testing right from the start, but one thing they often miss is the interaction between the two. Because Inspiration 2.0 can present your information either as a free-form chart or as an outline, you can use the chart to plan your global program segments (top-down design) and the outliner to punch out the code necessary for each segment (bottom-up testing).

In a flowchart created with Inspiration 2.0 (shown at left), the general algorithm for factoring a polynomial has been outlined. To code individual segments of this algorithm, you switch to Inspiration's outline view, where you can bang out and reorganize all the code statements (see listing 1). This sort of view change doesn't really scream to be noticed, but it's exactly the kind of subtle capability that makes Inspiration 2.0 so useful.

Inspiration 2.0 isn't flashy, it isn't full of multimedia bells and whistles, it doesn't fit any traditional business computing category, and it's not expensive. Yet it's exactly the kind of software that made the Mac a ground-breaking machine and keeps me hoping for better things. It's one more reason why the Mac can easily play the power, performance, and usable facility game with any desktop computer.

ITEMS DISCUSSED

Don Crabb is the director of laboratories and a senior lecturer for the computer science department at the University of Chicago. He is also a contributing editor for BYTE. He can be reached on BIX as "decrabb."

Listing 1: *This listing was derived from the Inspiration flowchart shown in the figure.*

```
Factoring polynomials
   Is there a common factor of all terms?
      Count number of terms
         Binomial
            Difference of two squares
               a2 - b2 =
(a + b) (a - b)
            Sum of two cubes
               a3 + b3 =
(a + b) (a2 - ab + b2)
            Difference of two cubes
               a3 - b3 =
(a - b) (a2 + ab + b2)
         Trinomial
            Trial and error or AC method
         Four terms
            Factor by grouping
      Factor out common factor
```

INSPIRATION™ 3.0

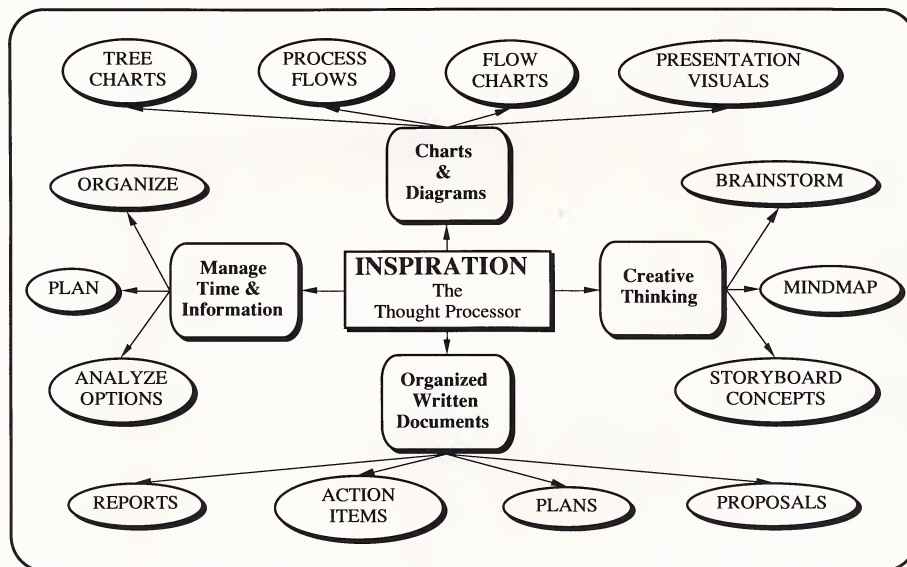## INSPIRATION brings the power of visual thinking to the Macintosh®.
See your ideas take shape and form!

Brainstorm and map out ideas... Lay out the steps of a project... Develop the flow of a process... Visualize the structure of an organization... Organize concepts... Storyboard your ideas... Analyze alternative solutions... Prepare a report... Create diagrams that help crystalize your thoughts or show ideas and information. INSPIRATION integrates easy-to-use diagraming and powerful outlining. Instantly switch from one view to the other. See your concepts as a visual and as text. Quickly transforms your vision into organized written documents and presentation visuals.

Visualize your Thoughts

Gain insight. INSPIRATION creates a visual representation of what's on your mind. Symbols hold each concept and links associate ideas. See relationships, thought patterns and themes. From fuzzy thoughts, a clear vision emerges.

Diagrams, Charts & Plans

Create diagrams quickly, make changes easily. Choose from a collection of symbols or add your own. Symbols are drawn and sized automatically. Move symbols and the links remain connected. Layers of diagrams can be linked together. You focus on your content, not the drawing process.

Presentation Quality Visuals

Create concise, organized visuals that are clearly understood and easily remembered. Instantly arrange your diagram into tree or organization charts. Mix type faces, sizes and styles within symbols. Import graphics. Use color, patterns, line thickness and shadows. Ensure that your most inspired ideas will always be remembered.
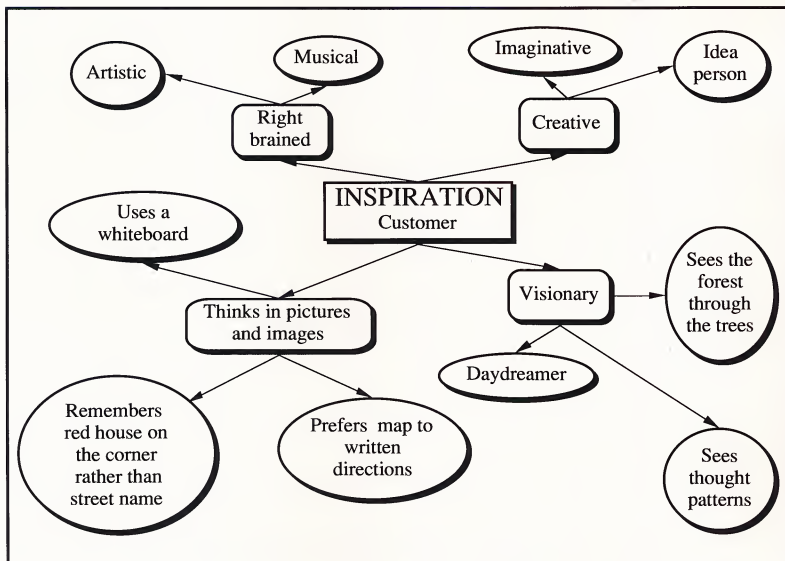
Outlines & Written Documents

With the stroke of a key instantly transform your visual into an outline. INSPIRATION's powerful outliner makes it easy to organize, rearrange and add detail. Quickly develop your concepts into action items, plans, proposals and reports.

Visualize your Thoughts

Brainstorm, plan and organize concepts. Create mindmaps, cluster diagrams, concept maps and storyboards. See what's on your mind.

- Just type, symbols pop up to hold your text

- Links are easily added, moved and redrawn. Text labels can be added to links

- Layers of sub-diagrams can be linked to main diagram

Diagrams, Charts & Presentation Visuals

Create and update process flows, flow charts, tree charts, organization charts and presentation visuals with INSPIRATION's smart drawing board.

- Dozens of ready made symbol shapes to select from - basic shapes, ANSI flow charting symbols, and INSPIRATION's unique designer and business symbols

- Import color and gray scale graphic images and your own custom shapes

- Mix type faces, sizes and styles within words and blocks of text

Concept map diagram:
- Artistic
- Musical
- Imaginative
- Idea person
- Right brained
- Creative
- INSPIRATION Customer
- Uses a whiteboard
- Visionary
- Sees the forest through the trees
- Thinks in pictures and images
- Daydreamer
- Remembers red house on the corner rather than street name
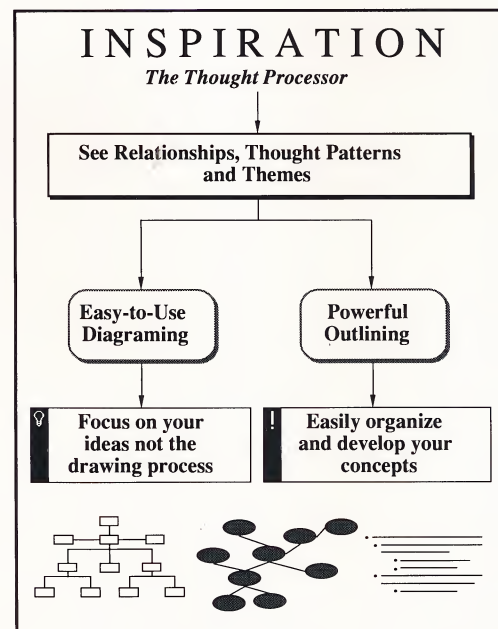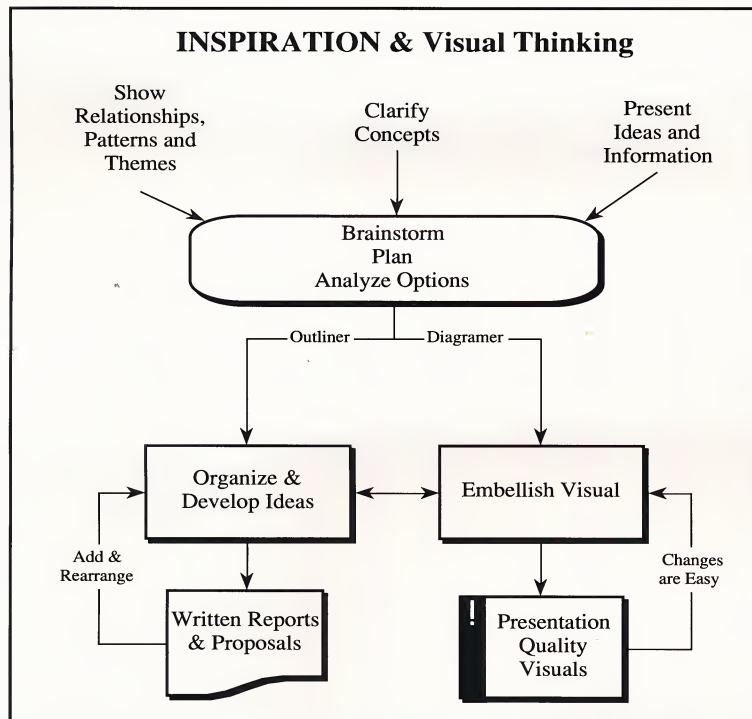- Prefers map to written directions
- Sees thought patterns

- Rapid Fire quick entry captures a surge of ideas as fast as you can think of them

- Random unconnected ideas can be added to the diagram anywhere

- Symbols automatically grow to fit text. Text centered horizontally and vertically

- Rearrange symbols by dragging, links remain connected

- Hide and Show sub-symbols – present different levels of detail as needed

- Each symbol has a notes window for writing. Text view makes it easy to edit and develop all notes at one time.

- Instantly organize your concepts into an outline or text document.

INSPIRATION
The Thought Processor

See Relationships, Thought Patterns and Themes

Easy-to-Use Diagraming

Powerful Outlining

Focus on your ideas not the drawing process

Easily organize and develop your concepts

INSPIRATION & Visual Thinking

Show Relationships, Patterns and Themes

Clarify Concepts

Present Ideas and Information

Brainstorm
Plan
Analyze Options

Outliner — Diagramer

Organize & Develop Ideas

Embellish Visual

Add & Rearrange

Changes are Easy

Written Reports & Proposals

Presentation Quality Visuals

Outlines & Written Documents

INSPIRATION's powerful outline view makes it easy to organize, rearrange and add detail. Quickly develop your concepts into action items, plans, proposals and reports.

- Add topics at different levels with single commands

- Reorganize topics by dragging. Associated subtopics move automatically with the topic

- Place graphics within the document to add interest

- Hide and show levels of detail

- Promote and Demote options move groups of topics

- Flip topics up or down for fast ordering of concepts

- Create instant organization charts & tree charts using Arrange option

- Full color palette of 35 colors with access to more. Use different colors for text, symbols and lines

- Line thickness, shadows and patterns emphasize information

- Align, Evenly Space and Paste Size options quickly enhance diagram

- Right angled links and dotted lines for polished visuals

- Grid feature snaps your symbols into place for a clean, neat look

- Fast printing - special shrink option to print diagram on one page.

INSPIRATION
The Thought Processor

INSPIRATION brings the power of visual thinking to the Macintosh. See your ideas take shape and form. Brainstorm and map out ideas... Lay out the steps of a project... Develop the flow of a process... Visualize the structure of an organization... Organize concepts... Storyboard your ideas... Analyze alternative solutions... Prepare a report... Create diagrams that help crystalize your thoughts and show ideas and information. INSPIRATION integrates easy-to-use diagraming and powerful outlining. Instantly switch from one view to the other. See your concepts as a visual and as text. Quickly transform your vision into organized written documents and presentation visuals.

A. See Relationships, Thought Patterns and Themes
Gain insight. INSPIRATION creates a visual representation of what's on your mind. From fuzzy thoughts, a clear vision emerges.

1. Easy-to-Use Diagraming
Create diagrams, charts and plans quickly. Make changes easily. *Focus on your ideas* not the drawing process. Create concise, organized visuals that are clearly understood and remembered.

2. Powerful Outlining
INSPIRATION's powerful outliner makes it easy to organize, rearrange and add detail to your document. Quickly develop you concepts into action items, plans, proposals and reports.

Outline

- Sort in ascending or descending order

- Automatic outline prefix labels, no prefix, or customize your own

- Quickly style topic and paragraph text globally, or individually style words and blocks of text

- Text view for conversion from non-hierarchical diagrams to documents

- Set margins, headers and footers

- Control page breaks, line spacing, indentation and level of detail to print.

General Features

- Switch between diagram and outline views. Change one view and the other is automatically updated

- Templates feature quickly creates standard diagrams or documents

- Print preview option

- Find/Replace feature for locating and/or changing text

- Check spelling in both documents and visuals with built-in spell checker

- Customize INSPIRATION with Save Settings and Set Preferences options

Learning Aids

- Comprehensive user manual

- Step-by-step tutorial

- Samples and idea books

Compatibility - Export

- Graphics: PICT, PICT2 files

- Documents: Plain text, WORD 3.0 & 4.0 RTF, MacWrite, ThinkTank and More 1.x

Compatibility - Import

- Graphics: via clipboard (PICT & PICT2)

- Documents: Plain text and MORE 1.x

System Information
All Macintosh models MacPlus and above (including the Classic, LC, and SI)

Requires two 800KB drives or hard disk and System 4.2 or higher

MultiFinder compatible

System 7 compatible

Supports color and large screen monitors

Apple ImageWriter, ImageWriter II, ImageWriter LQ, Apple Laser-Writer, LaserWriter Plus, LaserWriter II NT, NTX, SC and other Postscript compatible Laser printers, HP DeskWriter, Linotronic 100 and 300 photo typesetter & Quick-Draw compatible film recorder

Document Sizes

Diagrams can be up to 638 pages

Number of windows open at once limited only by your available Macintosh memory

Suggested List Price: $249

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